



Kamala Harris

**District Attorney
San Francisco**

San Francisco District Attorney
Kamala D. Harris

The **Smart on Crime** Approach
to Breaking the Cycle of Crime

Smart on Crime: What it Means

- **Current approach does not work**
 - We cannot use the same crime fighting tools for all types of crime
 - Wastes public resources and does not reduce crime
 - **We need a cost effective strategy to hold offenders accountable and break the cycle of crime**
 - Three areas of discussion: recidivism of low level drug offenders, elementary school truancy and childhood trauma
-

Why Recidivism Matters to Law Enforcement

- In 1980, California's prison population: 24,000 out of 24 million people. Today: 172,000 out of 36 million people (population has grown by 50 % while our **prison population has grown 617%**)
 - Approximately 70 % of those released from California prisons commit another offense, resulting in the **highest recidivism rate in the nation**
 - It costs an estimated \$10,000 to prosecute just one felony case, and about \$50,000 per year to house just one inmate in prison
 - **The cycle of recidivism is costly and ineffective**
-

Back on Track: Program Description

- Back on Track: **strict accountability combined with real opportunities** (employment, education, and life skills) to reduce recidivism.
 - Participants are first time, non-violent drug offenders who plead guilty to their crime and complete a rigorous training program.
 - Participant progress is monitored through regular court supervision. **Upon successful completion, case is dismissed and records are sealed.**
-

Back on Track: Program Successes

BOT Saves Public Resources:

- Back on Track: \$5,000 per participant per year
- County jail or prison: \$35,000-\$50,000 per year

BOT Reduces Recidivism:

- Back on Track graduates: less than 10 % recidivate
- Drug offenders coming out of prison: 54 % recidivate

Back on Track has been selected as a model program by the U.S. Department of Justice and by the National District Attorney's Association.

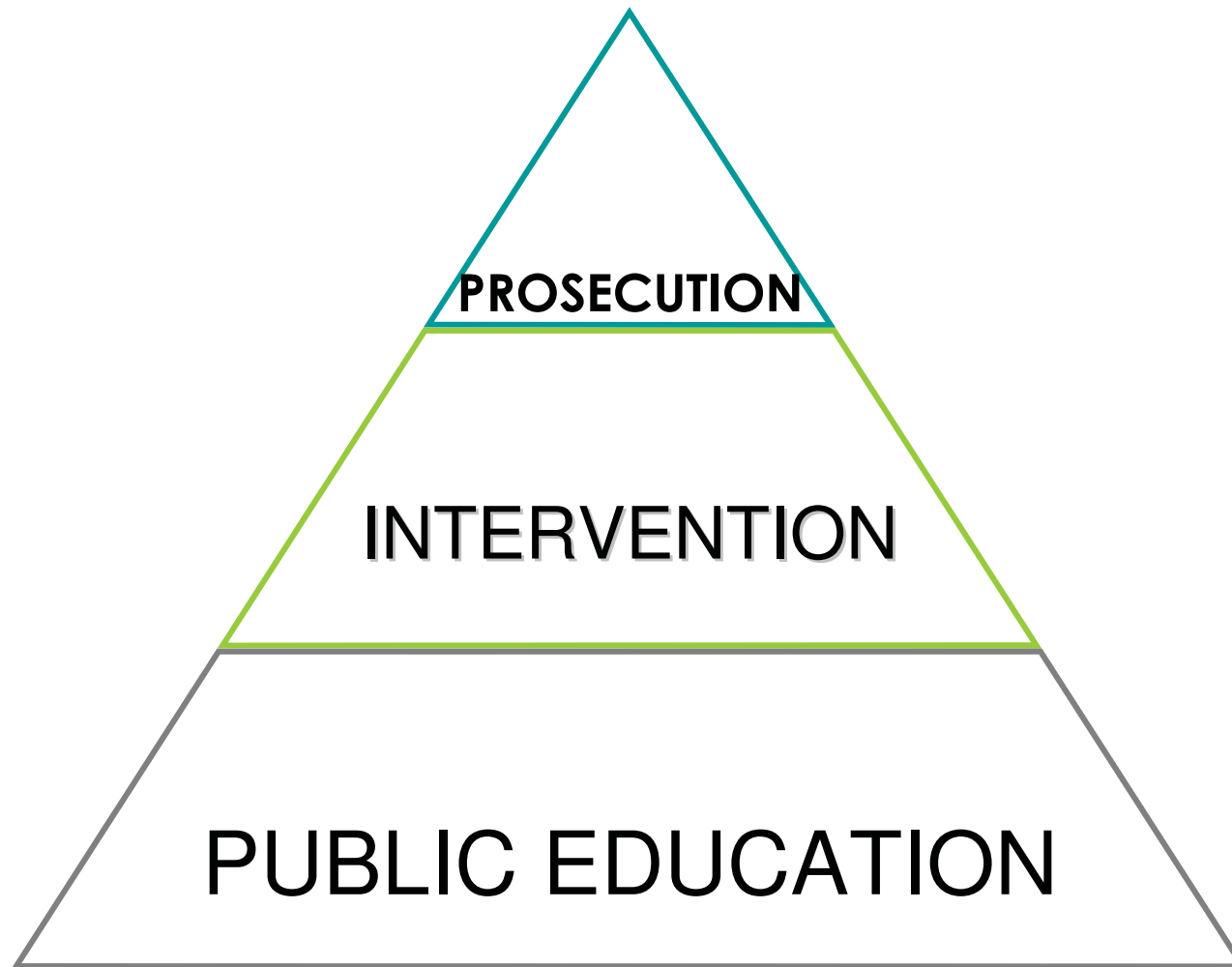
Violence Coalition



Why Truancy Matters to Law Enforcement

- Elementary school truancy is the biggest predictor of high school truancy and dropout rates
 - **75 % of all truant high school students will eventually drop out of school**
 - Three fourths of all prison inmates are dropouts
 - In San Francisco, **over 94 % of all homicide victims under the age of 25 are dropouts**
 - In San Francisco, almost 10 % of student body was habitually truant (5,000 students, **44% are in elementary school**)
-

The Truancy Reduction Initiative



Truancy Reduction Initiative: Program Description

Public Education: billboards, local media, school-wide forums, and letters to every parent

Intervention: “DA mediations” at the schools with families of children beginning to have attendance problems

Prosecution: Specialized Truancy Court with children and family services on hand, parents work with the court to get their children back in school

Truancy Reduction Initiative : Program Successes

From “DA mediations,” attendance at one school improved 40 % among students whose families participated, and 75 % at another school

- **Truancy rates** for elementary school students in San Francisco have **dropped 20 %**
 - Only had to terminate one prosecution case unsuccessfully
-

Why Childhood Trauma Matters to Law Enforcement

- Many young people experience violence in their homes or in the community.
 - Impact of repeated exposure to violence on children is enormous: can't concentrate, detached, or misbehave.
 - Affects everything from a child's sleep, to their school success, to the physical development of their brains.
 - Children repeatedly traumatized are more likely to become victims or perpetrators of violence later in life.
 - Studies show: **up to 35 % of children and youth exposed to community violence develop PTSD.**
-



Childhood Trauma: Addressing the Problem

- Trainings for public school teachers on signs and symptoms of trauma
 - Support for Kids and Youth (SKY) – a program to refer children of DV victims to counseling and support
 - Working with pediatricians to create a model child wellness center to reduce prevalence of unaddressed trauma among urban children
-